The Pacific Connection

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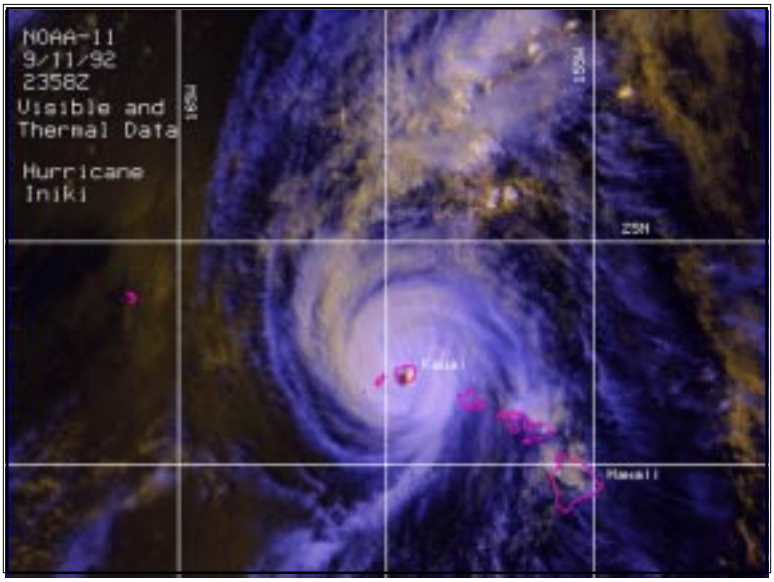
Preparedness exercise ushers in Hawaii hurricane season

Story by Alexander Kufel

Although the wounds inflicted by Hurricane Iniki on the Hawaiian islands of Kauai and Oahu in 1992 are nearly healed, memories of the destructive power of 134-mile-per-hour winds remain vivid. Iniki caused $1.6 billion in damage and permanently changed the lives of many people. This, and every year, Makani Pahili (Hawaiian for hurricane), a statewide exercise in hurricane preparedness, focuses on response to such a storm. It is traditionally conducted just before the hurricane season begins and this year was held from April 29 through May 7. While the exercise focuses on county- and state-level Civil Defense response, National Weather Service, FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency), the Army Corps of Engineers and other agencies also participate in order to exercise readiness and test their disaster plans. Makani Pahili also serves to remind people that even though the Hawaiian Islands are the most isolated land mass in the world, they are still vulnerable to tropical storms.

"Hurricane season begins June 1st and runs through Nov. 30th," said Ken Suiso of Emergency Management Division (EMD). "We look forward to participating in an exercise like this because it involves so many people and agencies that its the nearest we can get to reality."

New this year was the use of an Internet Web-based reporting system called ENGLINK that sped up the transfer of information between the various agencies.



***Satellite photograph of the Hawaiian Islands shows the "eye" of 1992 Hurricane Iniki centering on the island of Kauai.* NOAA photo.**

"There was a certain amount of apprehension going in to the exercise," said Suiso. "We couldn't predict with certainty how it would go. Many elements were new and untested. Also, our goal was to provide some training to as many people as possible, so for many of the participants this

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BG Strock named new commander of NWD

In mid-July 1999, both the Pacific Ocean Division and Northwest Division, with headquarters in Portland, will experience a change in leadership as Brig. Gen. Carl A. Strock finishes his two-year tour-of-duty as commander of POD and assumes the helm of NWD.

"I'm excited by this assignment," said Strock, "although it saddens me to leave behind the people at POD whom I've come to admire and respect. I love being part of the Corps and I've really learned a lot in the past two years. When I came to POD I was challenged by having been outside of the Corps for 15 years. I relied heavily on everyone to know what needed to be done. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the people of POD who taught me what being a Division Commander really means. Now, I feel that I can begin making contributions to the organization right from the first day."

Strock said that when he first received notice of his assignment to

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Control: *I don't control players. I try to control the environment around the players so they can flourish.*
—Pat Riley, New York Knicks coach

Visitors view Division, District projects

(Left) Visiting Hawaii to observe U.S. Army engineering operations, two leaders of the Republic of Korea Army chat with POD Commander Brig. Gen. Carl A. Strock June 1 prior to touring the 29th Engineering Battalion and the 45th Support Group. (From left) ROK Mapping Commander, Col. Yong Sik Chung, and ROK Chief of Engineers, Maj. Gen. Sun Man Chung.

Photos by Larry Hawthorne

(Right) Dr. Michael O'Connor, director of Construction Engineering Research Center, discusses Pacific Ocean Division programs with Brig. Gen. Strock during a command briefing June 3. O'Connor later briefed Honolulu District senior staff on future programs of Corps labs and presented information on a new software program — "Dr. Checks"— geared to automate the program review process and serve as a repository for lessons learned. The director was briefed on issues of special interest and taken on construction site visits of the Fort Shafter Combined Club Facility and the Force Main repair project also at Fort Shafter.

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was their first experience with a disaster of this magnitude."

The scenario unfolded for the Corps with HED's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) staff, the Crisis Management Team (CMT) and the Crisis Action Team (CAT) meeting in the EOC to determine their courses of action. POD also participated. One of the Corps-related functions of the exercise was to test the interplay between the stand-alone Division and Honolulu District in their respective roles under emergency conditions. The next day, a state-wide Condition of Readiness Four message was issued advising that winds of 50 knots (58 mph) or more were possible within the next 72 hours. Each team set its own responsibilities in motion and both procedures and communications systems were put to the test.

As advisories were issued forewarning impact within 48 hours, 24 hours and 12 hours, Hurricane Watch conditions changed to Hurricane Warning and then Hurricane Strike. District and Division commanders were briefed daily, and both the 249th Engineering Battalion (Prime Power) and South Pacific Division were asked for assistance. Suiso said that an agreement is in place for SPD to staff the FEMA Regional Assistance Center in San Francisco under these conditions.

On May 5, a week after the exercise began, the "All Clear" sounded and post-hurricane activities began. Among the most important was the gathering of "lessons learned" from the participants.

For example, the ENGLINK communications software contained a few "bugs" and revealed a need to be made a little more "user-friendly" under actual-use conditions. Roles needed to be defined in greater detail and, in some cases, training needed to be accomplished prior to the exercise. Questions came up about the number of people necessary to staff the EOC, and the EOC was evaluated for its ability to operate following a real disaster. Missing were back-up power and water, storm shutters, and an alternative place of operations.

"We captured comments from everybody and are using them to make adjustments to both our plans and procedures," said Suiso. "It was a very successful exercise in that we had this opportunity to see how things work and make adjustments before they're actually needed."